ABSTRACT

The topic of the present research investigation is "Assessing the objectives and effectiveness of psychological skill training programmes for differently abled children".

The mentally challenged children are special children who require a different kind of education in consonance with their special needs. In recent years, many institutions conducting psychological skill training programmes for such children have come up. According to Goldstein (1981), psychological skill training" is the planned, systematic teaching of the specific behaviours needed and consciously desired by the individual in order to function in an effective and satisfying manner over an extended period of time, in a broad array of positive negative, and neutral interpersonal contexts".

It is important for the success of such programmes that they should be periodically evaluated and when necessary modified. The first step in this direction would be to assess what exactly the teachers conducting the programme desire to achieve, that is what objectives are set by them. Parents are important partners in this venture. It is important to know their expectations from the programme. Success can be understood with reference to objectives. Therefore our study tried to probe the objectives of the psychological skill training programme and its
effectiveness (that is extent to which improvement was perceived in various directions) both at the level of parents and at the level of teachers.

The objectives of the present investigation may be summarized as follows:

1. Studying the nature of psychological skill training programmes being offered by various institutions.
2. Studying parental expectations from the programme.
3. Assessing parental perception of improvement.
4. Assessing parental perception of need for improvement.
5. Studying objectives of the programme according to teachers.
6. Assessing perception of improvement and non-improvement according to teachers.
7. Assessing programme outcomes in situations where play techniques have been used.

A questionnaire consisting of six items was designed to study parental expectations from the programme and their perception of its effectiveness. Questionnaire for teachers to study programme goals and effectiveness was also constructed. This consisted of six items. The sample consisted of 100 children drawn from five schools of mentally challenged in Meerut, Muzaffarnagar and Rishikesh. Responses were obtained from mother of each child and teachers engaged in guiding them. Thus 100 mothers and 25 teachers gave responses.
The questionnaires were administered individually to each parent and teacher. The questionnaires were open ended, therefore a large variety of responses were obtained. Seven categories of Goals were created out of 52 different reactions. They are, 'self sufficiency', 'interpersonal skills', 'emotional maturity', 'academic growth', 'physical deficits', 'cognitive skills', and 'vocational training'.

Results indicate that according to parents the three most important goals which they expect the programme to fulfil are self-sufficiency, inter-personal skills and academic growth. Parents observed most improvement in academics, followed by interpersonal skills then came self sufficiency. An important fact observed was that in all the areas where improvement is cited by parents, it is also pointed out that there is further need for improvement. In the area of physical deficits very little improvement was observed, and need for improvement was emphasized by a very large number of parents. The most important goals for teachers were interpersonal skills followed by academic growth and self sufficiency. Most improvement was observed in academic growth. Although perception of improvement and need for improvement was cited almost in equal degree on all goals, in terms of improvement of physical deficit and vocational training little improvement was seen.

On the basis of results obtained and observations of the researcher, several suggestions to institutions have been made. Some of them are related to infrastructure and other physical facilities whereas
others are related to the conduct of the programme, in terms of desirable methodology and availability of personnel who can give help at the psychological and medical level and in terms of neurological conditions of child. Training and better salary for teachers is also an important aspect. Adopting methodology of education which is appropriate and optimally useful for this target group is also essential. Mobilizing social forces to contribute in terms of financial help and vocational opportunities for such children should also not be lost sight of. Involving the parents in the process is also felt to be integral for the success of the programme. Suggestions for further research include the need to study parental and sibling attitudes, role of rewards/punishment, analysing amenability of specific activities to improvement, and comparing institutions conducting psychological skill training programmes following different methods.